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ABSTRACT

The authors describe the Special Needs In-Service Project to develop workshops to enhance the vocational and career options of special needs learners. Seven training areas are listed: program development and management skills; prevocational and vocational education materials for special needs training personnel, counselors, and paraprofessionals; development of an interagency agreement between vocational, special education, and vocational rehabilitation programs; training of personnel in implementing revised service delivery systems and fiscal support mechanism; strategies and techniques involving special needs students in vocational student organizations; and issues of sex bias, sex stereotyping, and sex discrimination in vocational programs. The project is reviewed in terms of an overview, preliminary analysis, role of the intervener, assessment of the intervention, recommendations and summary, and dissemination. Listed among recommendations are establishment of local committees to be actively involved with the workshop staff during the planning process, provision of opportunities for the instructional alternatives, and formulation of a systematic code for each participant and for identifying the minisession and overall evaluation forms in order to improve data usage. Statistics and forms relating to professional training activities are included. (SB)

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PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PERSONNEL: A GENERAL SYSTEMS APPROACH

Paper presented at
Conference on the Exceptional Black Child
Sponsored by the
Council on Exceptional Children
at
New Orleans, Louisiana
February 17, 1981

by

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Recent legislation designed to assure a free and appropriate education to exceptional individuals has been adopted at the national level through passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142). The provisions of this law focus attention on the development and implementation of educational programs specifically designed to develop the individual's maximum academic and vocational potential. In 1971, the State of Michigan passed the Mandatory Special Education Act (P.A. 198) that contained all of the provisions of the subsequent federal law, but also mandated the development of a comprehensive system of personnel development to provide pre-service and in-service education to educators affected by the mainstreaming laws.

In the past, special education personnel and vocational instructors have been prepared independently and many have gone their own separate ways with little coordination of efforts in providing services for the handicapped and disadvantaged learner. Sparks and Younie (1969) suggest that teachers' lack of preparation may account for their special students' inability to demonstrate superior gains. One only has to review recent literture to recognize that school systems and individual educators are experiencing a great deal of difficulty in addressing the needs of the special needs student group that includes the handicapped, disadvantaged, and persons with limited English speaking abilities. Part of this dilemma can be attributed to the increased need for pre-service and in-service activities for educators faced with the dual task of providing vocational education for special needs learners. (Young, Jennings and Haynie, 1979; Patton and Braithwaite, 1980)

The University of Michigan School of Education, through a grant received from the Michigan Department of Education Vocational-Technical Education Service, recently sponsored a series of competency-based in-service workshops. These training programs were designed for secondary-level public school educators such as vocational teachers, special education personnel, related paraprofessionals, and administrators. Also included were students, parents, and support services personnel from CETA and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Using the combined resources of the Occupational Education Program and the Special Education, Speech and Hearing Sciences Program, eight regional workshops were planned. The primary goal of the workshops was to aid participants in their ability to enhance the vocational and career options of special needs learners.

The purpose of the grant was to provide free in-service training based on the following seven objectives as identified by the Michigan Department of Education:

1. Program development and management skills.

2. Pre-vocational and vocational education materials for special needs training personnel, counselors, and paraprofessionals.

3. Teaching strategies and motivational techniques.

4. Development of an inter-agency agreement between vocational, special education, and vocational rehabilitation programs.

5. Training of personnel in implementing revised service delivery systems and fiscal support mechanisms.

6. Strategies and techniques involving special needs students in vocational student organizations.

7. Issues of sex bias, sex stereotyping, and sex discrimination in vocational programs.

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the University staff decided on a general systems approach using action-research techniques. The focus of a general systems approach, according to Watzlawick, et al. (1974), stresses understanding and change in the rules and goals of a system rather than in the individuals of that system. Hornstein, et al. (1971) has identified a data-based approach to a general systems model that uses "action-research" strategies to generate change processes within the system and emphasizes the link between research and action in a continuous cycle.

Using the general systems approach and the guidelines developed by Murrell (1974) dealing with intervention techniques, the Special Needs In-Service Project was divided into the following six components, representing the professional development activities conducted.

Intervention Process

I. Overview

   A. Based on RFP requirements.

II. Preliminary Analysis

   A. Informal statewide needs assessment.

   B. Integration of state/national needs.

C. Establishment of planning committee.

D. Input/feedback process.

III. Role of the Intervener

A. Task analysis.

B. Administration aspects.

C. Budget management.

IV. Assessment of the Intervention

A. Evaluation instruments.

B. Analysis.

V. Recommendations & Summary

VI. Dissemination

The following is a brief explanation of each component in hopes that it will aid others who are responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating professional development programs for vocational and special education personnel.

Component I - Overview

In order to establish the general goals of the proposed workshops, the seven objectives developed by the State Department in the request-for-proposals were used. A review of the State guidelines indicated rather specific direction regarding the level of intervention expected. Preliminary discussions with the State Department supervisor established additional guidelines regulating the type of activities and suggested methods for intervention.

Component II - Preliminary Analysis

A. Needs Assessment--Permission was obtained from the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff (1979) for the use of their need assessment instrument. The instrument was used to obtain statewide input from approximately 500 vocational/special education administrators, vocational rehabilitation personnel, MOSNA members, and vocational/special education teachers concerning their inservice needs. Data analysis is currently underway.

B. Integration of State and National Needs--Recognizing the need for balance between state and national priorities, the University of Michigan staff developed a list of competencies and proposed topics to be presented at each of the workshops. Since an extensive review of literature had already been completed each worshop was designed to draw heavily on the competencies already developed within the vocational/special education communities.

C. Local Planning Committees--In an attempt to ensure that each workshop reflected the real needs and interest of the participants, local planning committees were established. University of Michigan staff members met with five to ten special needs contact persons in each region served. Discussions included:

1. Identification of vocational/special education personnel to be invited, e.g. teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals;

2. Suggestions for topics based on regional prioritized needs;

3. Suggestions for proposed presentors;

4. Proposed workshop formats;

5. Assistance needed for registration and routine workshop activities.

D. Input and Feedback--After each planning committee meeting, notes were summarized and forwarded to all contact persons for additional input, comments, suggestions, and feedback. This step was undertaken to further ensure as much regional input as possible. Once local needs had been identified and prioritized, preregistration brochures were developed and mailed to contact persons for distribution to eligible participants.

Component III - Role of the Intervener

A. Task Analysis Process--The task analysis process was a crucial part of the overall organization of the project. Staff involved in the project were informed of the step-by-step process assigned, and an appropriate time line for each task identified. Staff input proved to be invaluable once they had an idea of what the total project involved.

B. Administrative Aspects--One of the overriding goals of the project was to establish an environment which was conducive to learning, sharing, and interaction among participants. A number of logistical arrangements were discussed and included in the task analysis process.

In addition, a variety of session formats were decided upon (AERA 1980). They included:

1. Single presentation sessions which allowed keynote speakers a 45 minute presentation with 15 minutes for reactions;

2. Individually scheduled sessions allowing for three to five presentors to discuss similar topics;

3. Carousel approach which allowed for maximum interaction with five to ten presentors assigned to individual tables;

4. Poster sessions which combined graphic displays of materials with the opportunity for individualized, informal discussions.

C. Cost Effectiveness--In order to safeguard for cost effectiveness, the University of Michigan staff had to be flexible and open to changes in the original proposal. Because of rises in costs which changes were made. Such changes included combining regional workshops, limiting participants to confirmed reservations only, establishing an exact amount of money available for consultants, and encouraging used of statewide vocational/special/vocational rehabilitation personnel. Figure 1 gives an overview of attendance, hotel costs and participant costs for each workshop.

Component IV - Assessment of the Intervention

A. Evaluation Instruments--Evaluation was identified as a priority of the University of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Education. The evaluation procedures established included a needs assessment, formative and summative evaluations. Throughout the workshops, evaluation instruments were examined for problems which might be reflected in the returns. Adjustments were made and a final instrument including preassessment, evaluation of the morning and afternoon sessions and a section evaluating the overall effectiveness of the workshop was adopted. See Appendices A and B.

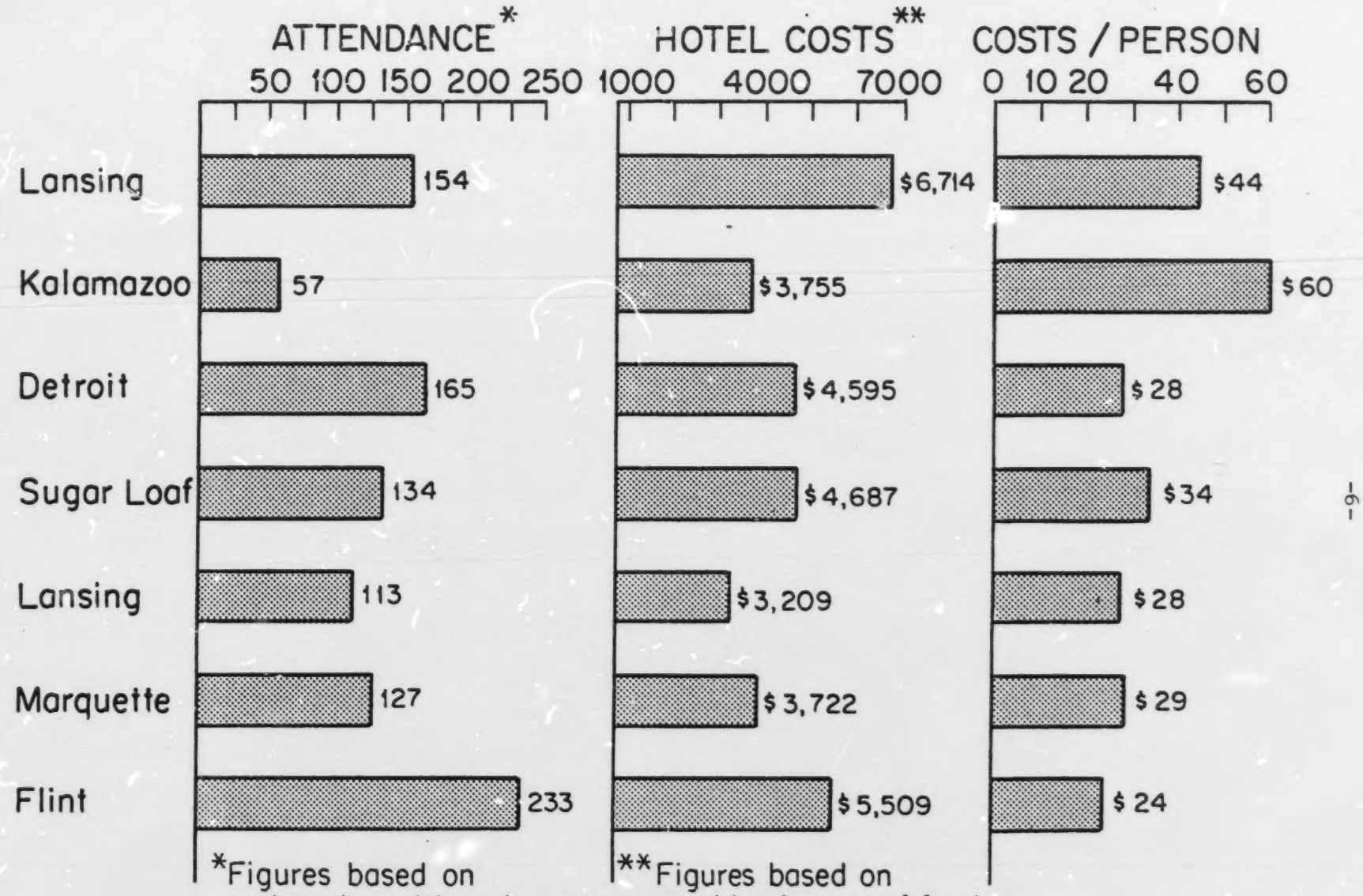
B. Analysis--Evaluations were gathered and analyzed for all workshops. The information in figure 2 represents the degree of overall satisfaction with each of the workshops. In addition, information related to rank order preferences for each workshop and individual workshop sessions is presented in Appendices C and D.

Component V - Recommendations and Summary

The following list of recommendations may be useful to those engaged in similar professional development activites.

A. <u>Planning the Training</u>

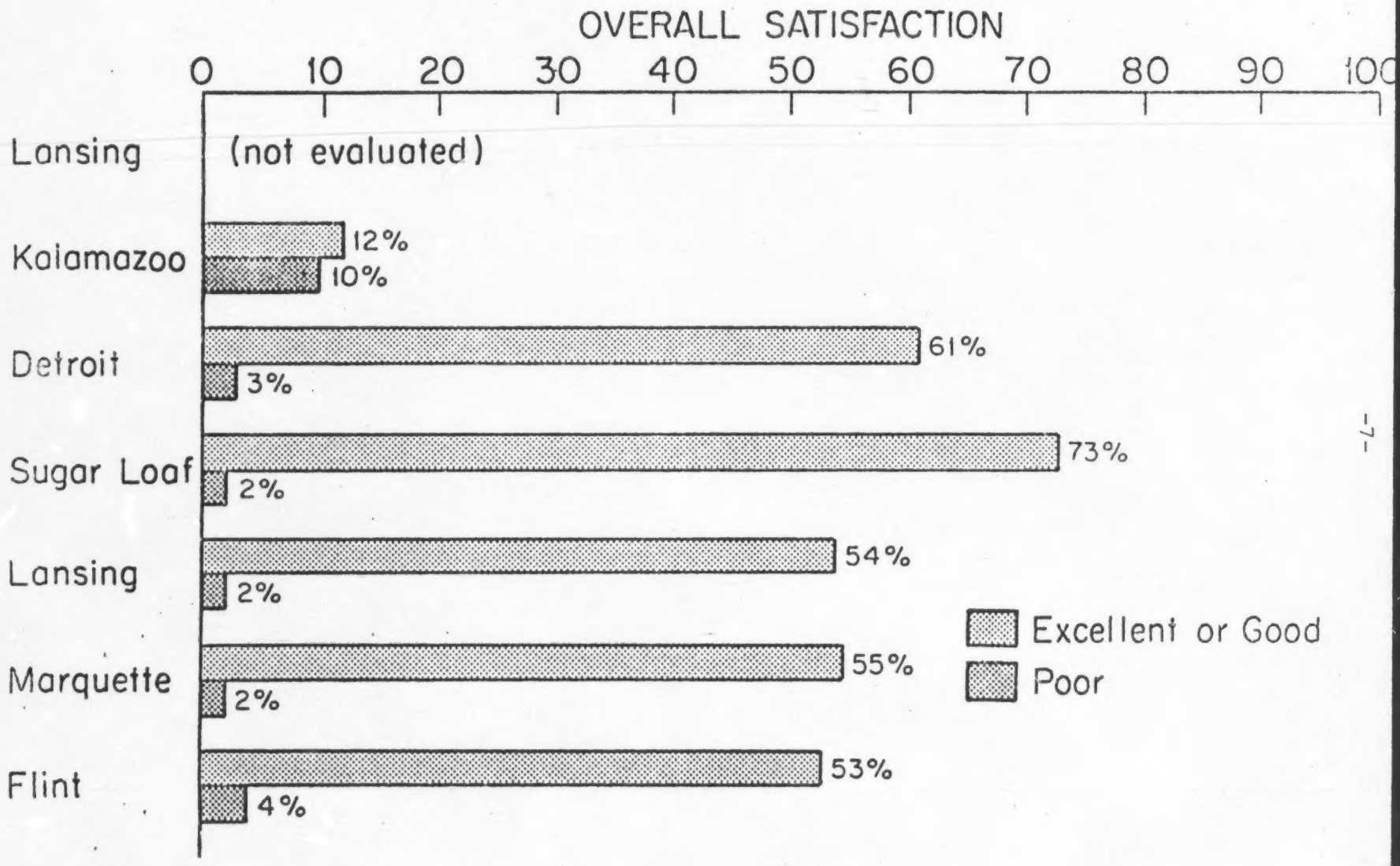
- Grant periods for the projects should include a six-month lead time for preparing forms, handouts, and other materials. Results obtained from a needs assessment should be coupled with input from the local planning committee.
- Local committees should be established and become actively involved with the workshop staff during the planning process.
- Topics relating to awareness, attitudes, and interpersonal interactions should be incorporated into future inservice training.
- A field test or pilot of the workshop should be conducted.



*Figures based on registration, although actual attendance varied.

**Figures based on combined costs of food. for all participants and double occupancy lodging for those outside of a 25 mile radius

Figure 2


OVERALL SATISFACTION
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Lansing
(not evaluated)
Kalamazoo
12%
10%
Detroit
61%
3%
Sugar Loaf
73%
2%
Lansing
54%
2%
Marquette
55%
2%
Flint
53%
4%
Excellent or Good
Poor

. Advertising materials for a mini-session should include an abstract of the session, describing specific aspects of the topic to be covered.

. Participants should be afforded opportunities to self-select at least some of the instructional alternatives.

• Information should be obtained by workshop staff concerning the hotel in which the workshop is to take place. Specific questions should be asked relative to management, space, lodging, food, and other relevant matters.

B. Conducting the Training

• A systematic code should be established for each participant and for identifying the mini-session and overall evaluation forms in order to improve the specific usage of the data (e.g., matching sex composition to that of presenter, or years of experience and role with ratings of mini-sessions).

• The responsibility for explaining, collecting, and labeling all evaluation forms should be assigned to one staff member in order to insure maximum input/investement by participants, which is especially important for an appropriate evaluation of the mini-sessions. The staff member could also count the number of participants in each session to provide a better idea of the representativeness of the responses.

• Evaluation forms from each mini-session should be stapled together with a cover page identifying the name of the mini-session, speaker, and number of participants in order to prevent loss or misplacement of data.

• Items included on the evaluation form should be clearly and specifically stated. For example, the term "organization" might be defined as "management of instructional components which are controlled internally by workshop staff." "Organization" might also be used to indicate the lodging and eating facilities which are controlled externally by hotel staff. Such clarity would lead to better interpretation of evaluation responses.

• Instructions to participants in filling out the evaluation forms should stress the following points:

confidentiality and relevance of their responses and potential use of the data. The importance of honesty and specificity, rather than vague comments, in the open-ended questions should also be underscored.

Summary

It is obvious that a great deal of professional development is needed for that population faced with the dual task of providing career/vocational preparation for special needs students. It is hoped that information provided in this report will aid other personnel in preparing and implementing in-service programs. Data analysis is completed. Detailed results are available upon request.

Component VI - Dissemination

Three reports have been supplied to the Michigan Department of Education which summarize all of the major activities of the 1979-80 Special Needs grant. In addition, several publications and presentations have been made at state and national conferences.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WORKSHOPS ON VOCATIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TOPICS
FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

VEPSN

EVALUATION INSTRUCTIONS

To determine whether or not the workshop met your needs and our objectives, we would like for you to give us your honest opinion on the design, presentation, and value of this workshop. Please circle the number which best expresses your reaction to each of the items.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1.	The organization of the workshop was:	Excellent 7	6	5	4	3	2	Poor 1
2.	The objectives of the workshop were:	Clearly Evident 7	6	5	4	3	2	Vague 1
3.	The work of the consultants was:	Excellent 7	6	5	4	3	2	Poor 1
4.	The ideas and activities presented were:	Very Interesting 7	6	5	4	3	2	Dull 1
5.	The scope (coverage) was:	Very Adequate 7	6	5	4	3	2	Inadequate 1
6.	My attendance at this workshop should prove:	Very Beneficial 7	6	5	4	3	2	No Benefit 1
7.	Overall, I consider this workshop:	Excellent 7	6	5	4	3	2	Poor 1
8.	Do you feel a need for additional information about the topic?	1. Yes				2. No		

The stronger features of the workshop were: _____

_____

_____

The weaker features were: _____

_____

_____

General Comments: _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

VESPN
vocational education for persons with special needs
inservice workshop

VESPN
MINI-SESSION ASSESSMENT

Check one: ___ Session #1 ___ General Session #1
___ Session #2 ___ General Session #2
___ Session #3

Please complete the following:

_____ _____
(title of session) (presentor(s)

DIRECTIONS:
To determine whether or not this mini-session met your need and our objectives, we would like you to give us your honest opinion on the design, presentation, and value of this mini-session. PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBERS WHICH BEST EXPRESSES YOUR REACTION TO EACH OF THE ITEMS.

1. The organization of this session was:	Excellent 7	6	5	4	3	2	Poor 1
2. The objectives of this session were:	Clearly Evident 7	6	5	4	3	2	Vague 1
3. The ideas and activities presented were:	Very Interesing 7	6	5	4	3	2	Dull 1
4. The scope (coverage) was:	Very Adequate 7	6	5	4	3	2	Inadequate 1
5. Overall, I consider this session:	Excellent 7	6	5	4	3	2	Poor 1

The stronger features of this session were: _____

_____

The weaker features were: _____

_____

General Comments: _____

_____

DESCRIBE SKILLS AND INSIGHTS YOU HAVE GAINED (use other side)

jd
4/2/80

APPENDIX C

RANK ORDER PER WORKSHOP

(Overall Consideration)

DETROIT

Title	Mean (7.00 high)
Career and Job Placement	6.00
Unknown	5.98
Special Instructions	5.93
Special Education	5.54
Disadvantaged Students	5.54
Cross Cultural	5.53

SUGARLOAF

Develop Self-esteem	6.64
Handicapped	6.64
Communication Patterns	5.92
Multi-Cultural	5.79
Job Stress	5.79
CETA	5.55

LANSING

Develop Self Esteem	6.82
Bilingual Students	6.75
Communication Patterns	6.67
Job Stress	6.64

Title	Mean (7.00 high)
LANSING continued	
Deaf Students	6.36
Support Services	6.33
Special Education Laws	6.17
Keynote Speaker	6.15
Public Policy	6.15
Instructional Support	6.08
EMI & EI Students	5.82
Job Placement	5.28
Sex Equitity	5.12
Paraprofessionals	5.00
MARQUETTE	
Pedogogical Model	6.13
Human Relations Model	5.46
Keynote Speaker	5.21
Behavioral Model	5.13
FLINT	
Keynote Speaker	6.88
Job Stress	6.14
Teachers and Paraprofessionals	6.13
Work Study	5.96
Handicap Students	5.90
Communication Skills	5.62
Support Services	5.28

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